

The Federal Government – Not the Postal Service – Should Absorb the Cost of “Homeland Security.”

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The recent distribution of anthrax through the U.S. Postal Service made it clear that our country and our citizens are at risk of attack through the use of biological and chemical “warfare.” Whether these threats come from radicals within our borders, or foreign terrorists or countries, they are nonetheless an attack on the citizens of the United States and our country in general.

As a result, the anthrax incidents, and the September 11 tragedy, and the knowledge that our free and open society may make us susceptible to nontraditional warfare attacks, the U.S. Postal Service has begun to sterilize mail.

One of the most effective ways to reach Americans is through the mail – whether you are sending an advertisement, or a deadly disease or chemical. For the price of a postage stamp, terrorists or foreign governments could kill thousands of Americans. Worse yet, without the appropriate security, the attack would be completed before we even knew we were engaged in combat.

There seems to be no question that security for the mail should be beefed up. The question being discussed on Capitol Hill as this article is written is, “Who should pay the bill?” Some argue that the cost making the mail secure is a cost of doing business for the Postal Service. Others believe that it is a critical part of the defense of our country and its citizens, and as such, is a cost of Homeland Defense to be borne by the Federal Government. I side with the later group.

While the Postal Service may be quasi-private now, it has long been, and it continues to operate as a government sponsored monopoly. The ability to send mail to anywhere in the United States or the world, and receive mail at any address in the United States from the U.S. or anywhere in the world is a service that we have come to expect and rely upon in the conduct of both our private and business affairs. Protecting citizens and our country from attacks utilizing this service should not be a cost of business to be borne by the Postal Service. Instead, it is a part of the overall need for stepped-up Homeland Defense.

Mandating additional security and then requiring the Postal Service to pay for that mail security by increasing postal rates is not only unfair to the Post Office, but seriously penalizes the thousands of businesses that rely on the mail to continue to exist. Magazines, newspapers, catalog companies, major American companies that now rely substantially on mail marketing, direct marketing companies, seminar companies, charities that solicit donations, etc., etc. are already struggling and certainly do not need a

postal rate increase (on top of those already planned) to pay for a national defense function.

I am sure it has not escaped printers and mailers that all of the above users that would be adversely affected by a postal rate increase to pay for national defense are distributors of printed products. The fallout from any cutback in the use of the mail to distribute these printed products will flow downhill to the printers who produce them and the companies that address and mail them. The volume of products that are now distributed through the mail would no doubt diminish in direct response to a postage rate increase.

Of course, in the end, the taxpayers will foot the bill anyway. However, that bill will be buried in the federal taxes we pay, and will not be collected in such a way as to harm the Postal Service, mail users, and the printing industry.

If you have an opinion on this subject (or any issue of importance to your business) write your Congresspersons and Senators. You can find their email addresses at <http://www.capwiz.com/printing/home/>

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